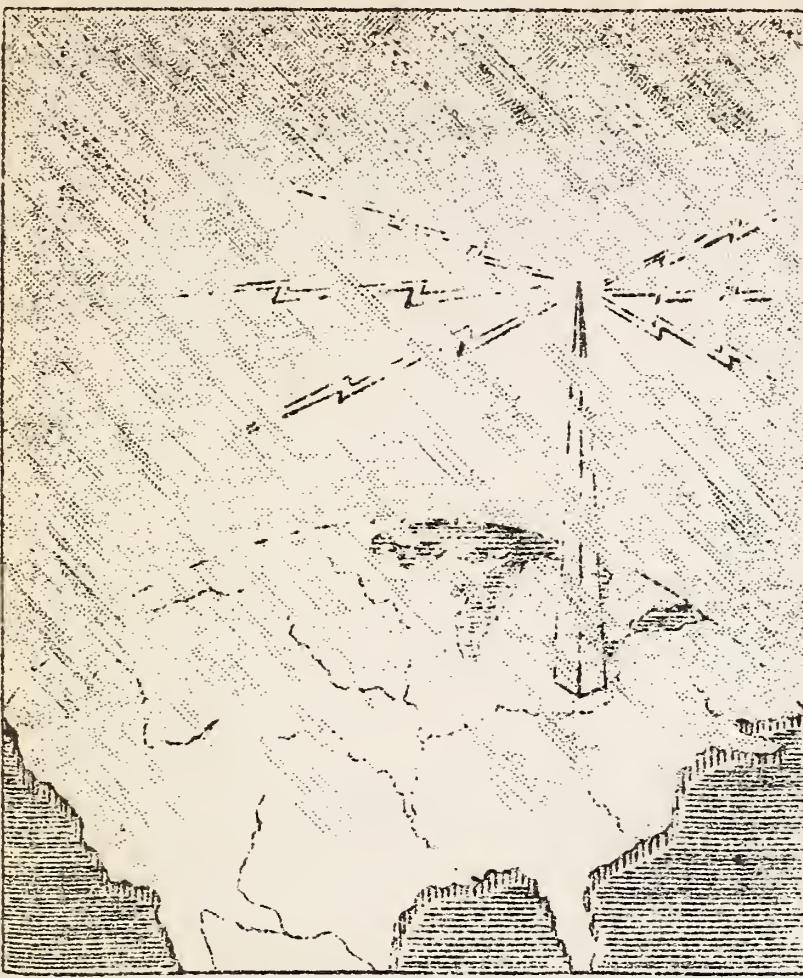


## **Historic, Archive Document**

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SEP 15



— — —  
FORTUNES

WASHED

AWAY

"BENTON COUNTY, INDIANA --

THE PRAIRIE DISTRICT"

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Broadcast No. 3 in the third year  
in a series of dramatizations  
of better land use

WLW, Cincinnati

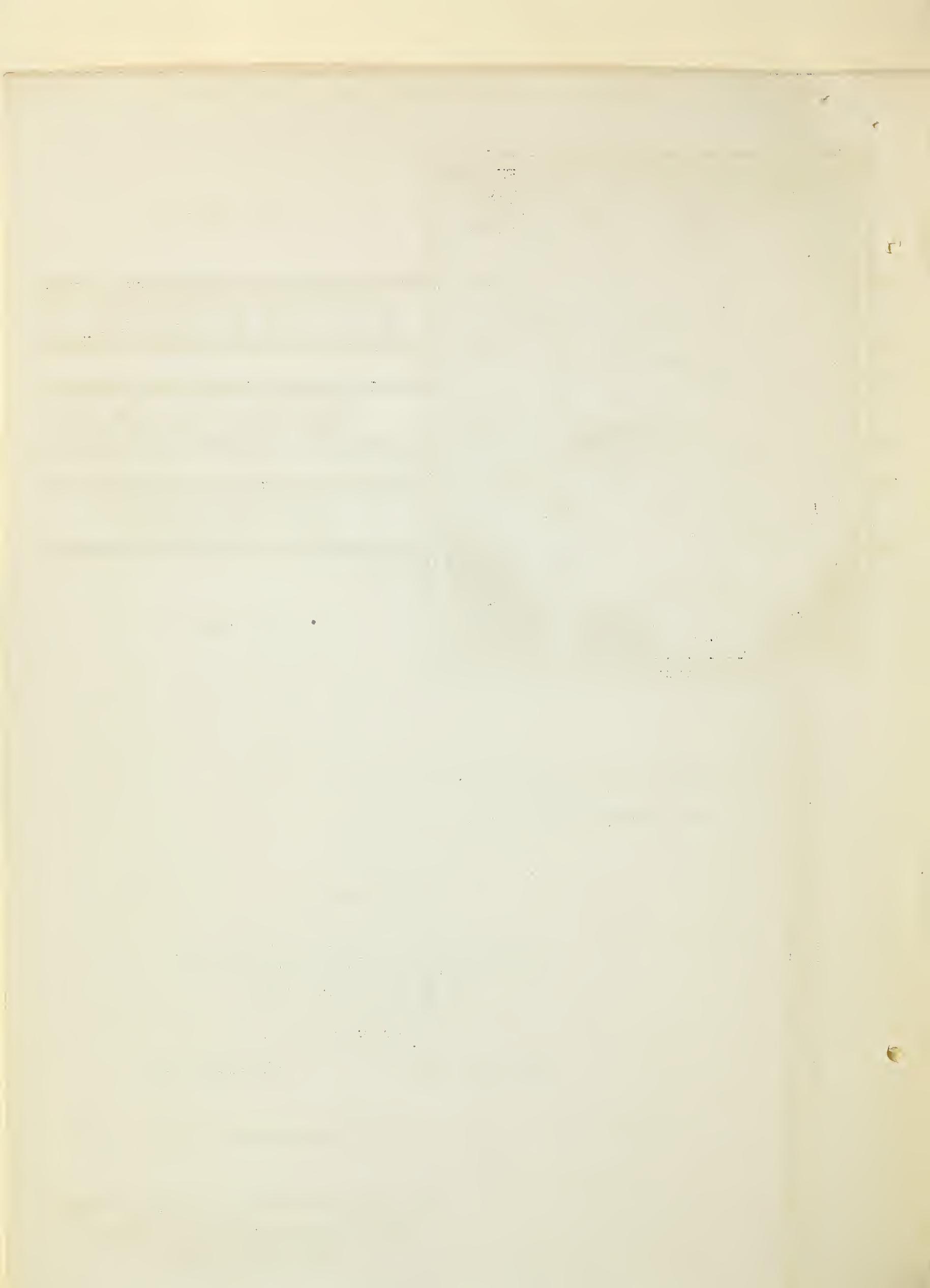
May 11, 1940

1:15-1:30 pm

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
BUREAU OF SOIL CONSERVATION  
Dayton, Ohio

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
DAYTON, OHIO



SOUND: Thunder and rain....

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

In yesteryear, wild buffalo hunters rode over the plains of Benton County, Indiana, part of the Grand Prairie of Illinois. The smoke of the red man's campfires curled lazily from its pleasant groves. Trails leading from the Wabash to Chicago and Detroit crossed its vast meadows of wild grass. This was the land of the Prairie Potawatomi.

ORGAN: BY THE WATERS OF MINNETONKA, fading....

ANNOUNCER

Benton County was named for Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, a great statesman from the west who for thirty years stood in the halls of congress to plead the cause of the pioneer. Many pioneers there were, then, men like the Quaker, Thomas Atkinson. In 1828 George Worthington spent the night with him in Philadelphia... (fade

WORTHINGTON

I tell you, man, there's nothing like it... those grazing lands north of the Wabash.

ATKINSON

Thou tell an interesting story, friend Worthington. Indeed, this is a restless age, and young men are looking to the west.

WORTHINGTON

And well they might! I fed 300 2-year-old steers on those grasses, before driving them to market.

ATKINSON

Did thee see much of the grass that is called... blue-stem?



WORTHINGTON

Much of it? Why, man, it stretches as far as the eye can see. I have never seen the like.

ATKINSON

The tale is told that the grasses grow higher than the withers of a horse.

WORTHINGTON

And a true tale that is, my good Quaker friend.

ATKINSON

But the Indians -- they are troublesome?

WORTHINGTON

Their numbers are dwindling. Their spirit is broken. And, to a follower of William Penn like yourself, I think they would be friendly. There's something about you fellows....

ATKINSON

This land of the tall grass interests me. Perhaps my brother John and I should go to the Grand Prairie.

WORTHINGTON

That's what I was hoping you'd say. It's a great opportunity for a young man like yourself.

ATKINSON

Opportunity is not great here. I drive cattle from Ohio to the markets of Philadelphia for \$7.50 a drover's month, and walk back all the way, 500 miles. Methinks I could do better driving my own cattle.

WORTHINGTON

It's hard work, Thomas.



ATKINSON

Thou should know I am willing to work hard. Why, to pay for my wedding shoes I threshed in one day with a flail 28 bushels of rye. Well I remember that. I bound the straw of each six sheaves into a bundle, and next day cleaned the grain, not with a windmill, mind you, but by sifting it through a riddle. Nay, Worthington, 'tis not hard work that I fear. 'Tis an opportunity I'm wanting for my good wife and the fine family with which I hope we are to be blessed.

WORTHINGTON

I gather from this, my friend, that you are thinking seriously of grazing cattle on the great plains of the blue-stem.

ATKINSON

Thou has spoken what is in my heart, Worthington.

ORGAN: ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH.

ANNOUNCER

Two years later young Thomas Atkinson drove his cattle through the blue-stem of Benton County. Off on the horizon to the north and west were beautiful inland groves that appeared like islands of blue in a sea of green. And by his herds wandering tribesmen of the Potawatomi passed....(fade)...

SOUND: Indian tom-tom, fade in and out...

INDIAN VOICE

Ugh! White man grazes cattle on Indian's range.

ATKINSON

Peace to thee, red man. My cattle grow fat on thy tall blue-stem.

INDIAN VOICE

White man follower of red man's great friend, William Penn. Go in peace.



SOUND: Indian tom-tom, fade in and out....

WORTHINGTON

These Indians sure respect your "thees and thous", friend Thomas.

ATKINSON

Members of the Society of Friends are honorable men, that is why.

WORTHINGTON

I know. Well, 'tis a long way to Philadelphia, and a long way back. Sometimes I fear for my life on these return trips, with all that money in our pockets. I can't understand why you aren't armed.

ATKINSON

Too firmly am I convinced of the wrong of taking human life, Worthington. Only once have I been molested.

WORTHINGTON

Oh? When was that?

ATKINSON

A storm forced me one night to seek shelter at a disreputable inn called the Drover's Tavern.

WORTHINGTON

I know that place..on Bloody Run, in Bedford County, Pennsylvania.

ATKINSON

The same. I was on a return trip from the Philadelphia markets.

WORTHINGTON

And I suppose you had much cash on your person.

ATKINSON

Yes, all the proceeds of my sale. During the night, I was kept awake by the sound of the rushing waters beneath my window. I was startled to hear someone opening my door.

WORTHINGTON

And you were unarmed, as usual.



ATKINSON

Thou knowest I have never carried weapons. I slipped quietly over by the wall, my money pouch in hand. As the intruder entered I dashed out the door and clattered down the steps. He followed, but the landlord awakened and came to my rescue. The intruder pretended to have entered my room by mistake, but I know he meant to rob me and throw my body from the window into the stream below.

WORTHINGTON

That was a narrow escape, Thomas. I wonder you don't have more trouble.

ATKINSON

Careless hunters sometimes stampede my cattle, but the Indians never do. They invariably treat me with respect because I am a follower of William Penn.

ORGAN: ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH.

ANNOUNCER

Thomas Atkinson was the first great cattle man north of the Wabash became the founder of a family whose descendants have been among the foremost citizens of Benton County. There were other great cattle barons, men like Edward Sumner, Henry Roberston, Colonel William J. Templeton, Moses Fowler, men whose names were known in every cattle market from Cincinnati to Chicago and on to the Atlantic seaboard.

ORGAN: OMNIOUS CHORD.

ANNOUNCER

But the plow broke the plains. The swamps were drained. Great waving fields of wheat and tall corn and oats replaced the vast herds of grazing cattle. Benton County became a rich agricultural community.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.



ANNOUNCER

In 1914, the Benton County Old Settlers' Association was organized. Highlight of the meeting was a talk by one of the oldest settlers, Duncan McArthur Williams.

SOUND: Voices in conversation, fading....

WILLIAMS

I think Doctor Rodman put it right when he said that our chief purpose is to maintain an interest in the welfare of our agriculture, which is unquestionably our most valuable asset.

SOUND: Hum of voices, fading....

WILLIAMS

Well, that's not what Doctor Rodman asked me to talk about. He said for me to give some early recollections of Benton County. I shall do that, but I feel that I am old enough to be a free man, and I can stray a little if I want to.

SOUND: Laughter...

WILLIAMS

There is one thing I would like to emphasize. The good book says that "God will renew the face of the earth." While I have confidence that this renewal will take place in God's own time, my advice to the improvident farmer is not to wait for the renewal of the earth, but to haul out manure at once, rotate his crops, plow a little deeper and make a liberal use of clover, for an old truism has it that "God helps those who help themselves."

ORGAN: ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH.

ANNOUNCER

These are true stories of the background of agriculture in historic Benton County, Indiana. And now, for more up-to-date information, we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Ewing Jones.



JONES

Thanks, \_\_\_\_\_. First let me acknowledge that much of the information we have used was obtained through the courtesy of Judge Elmore Barce of the Benton County circuit court, and historian of Fowler, Indiana.

ANNOUNCER

And it's mighty interesting, Ewing. But one thing I'd like to ask: Did the farmers of Benton County take that splendid advice offered by Mr. Williams in his speech at the old settlers' meeting?

JONES

You mean, to rotate crops, use clover, and so forth?

ANNOUNCER

That's what I do mean.

JONES

Well, I'm sorry to say, \_\_\_\_\_, that a lot of them didn't take Mr. Williams' advice. You see, this prairie land was so rich, and apparently so level, that many thought it was inexhaustible. A lot of farmers went in for corn and oats. They raised these two crops year after year, or corn every year.

ANNOUNCER

And naturally that reduced the productive capacity of the soil.

JONES

Yes, fertility did decline. Here's something interesting: Benton County, not so many years ago, ranked second among counties in the United States in productivity. Now it ranks about 49th among the counties of Indiana.

ANNOUNCER

But was failure to rotate crops the only cause of this decline in fertility?



JONES

By no means. In fact, the fertility taken off by the cropping system was slight compared to soil erosion losses, even though most farmers didn't realize it. This prairie land, \_\_\_\_\_, looks so level that you wouldn't expect erosion to cause much damage. But the slopes are long, and during heavy rains the water gets up a lot of run-off speed, and carries away tons of topsoil.

ANNOUNCER

Erosion was sort of "sneaking" away the soil from these long slopes then?

JONES

That's just what it was doing, and it had been for several years. In the fall of 1937, the Soil Conservation Service established the Prairie Demonstration Project at Fowler, which is almost in the exact center of Benton County. A soil survey showed that, on most of the croplands that had been farmed heavily, about three-fourths of the topsoil had disappeared -- fortunes washed away.

ANNOUNCER

I'll bet that was startling news to a lot of farmers.

JONES

Of course it was, \_\_\_\_\_. But just like their sturdy ancestors who conquered the prairie country, they started in to do something about it. Owners of more than 8,000 acres of land in Benton County are working with the Prairie soil conservation project.

ANNOUNCER

Well, Ewing, what are some of the things these cooperating farmers are doing to conserve their soil?



JONES

One of the most important is longer rotations, with a legume included in the rotation. They are using lime and fertilizer. And, of course, they are using many erosion control cropping practices such as contour farming, strip cropping, terracing, and sod waterways. I should add that all of the cooperating farmers have eliminated fall plowing, which left the ground bare over winter.

ANNOUNCER

That brings up the usual question, Ewing. Has the program of the demonstration project in Benton County been a success?

JONES

I should say it has been very much of a success \_\_\_\_\_. But, of course, 8,000 acres represents just a small part of the problem area. Farmers outside of the project boundaries have become interested in saving soil and improving the fertility of their lands. And so they have organized a soil conservation district, something that more farmers are doing every day.

ANNOUNCER

That sounds like Benton County farmers really mean business.



JONES

It's a mighty good sign. There are about 37,000 acres in the soil conservation district just organized in Benton County. Incidentally, they've named it the Prairie Soil Conservation District. William Cook, "Swede" Lawson, William Keefe, John Leuck, Doc Smith -- these are some of the men who were leaders in organizing the district. And, of course, County Agent E. M. Christen had a lot to do with it. So, \_\_\_\_\_, Benton County farmers like wide awake farmers everywhere, are really going to town. They're going to put their agriculture on a permanent basis through their newly-organized soil conservation district.

ANNOUNCER

This week we salute!

JONES

This week we salute M. C. Rymer, of Bradley County, Tennessee. Mr. Rymer is a unit-demonstration farmer, cooperating with the Tennessee Valley Authority and the University of Tennessee. Like many another farmer in rolling country, he had plenty of trouble with soil erosion - that is, until 1935, when he decided to become a conservation farmer. He returned his most eroded land to permanent pasture. He terraced some of the more gentle slopes that had been washing. He decided to leave the draws in permanent sod. He began using crimson clover as winter cover, instead of leaving the ground bare over the winter. Incidentally he turned this crimson clover under in the spring, and obtained a 10-bushel increase in corn. He applied lime and triple-superphosphate liberally. So, a salute to M. C. Rymer, conservation farmer of Bradley County, Tennessee.

SOUND: Clicking of telegraph key....



ANNOUNCER

News in the conservation world!

JONES

Suppose we cooperate on this, \_\_\_\_\_. You point to the map, and I'll do the newscasting.

ANNOUNCER

That's a bargain.

JONES

But don't point to a spot I'm not prepared to talk about.

Suppose you point to, say, New York.

ANNOUNCER

All right...news from New York.

JONES

The New York legislature has just passed the enabling act permitting soil conservation districts to be formed...it's the 38th state in the union to take this action toward better land use.

ANNOUNCER

Indiana....

JONES

This is of special interest to farmers in Gibson County, Indiana. They will vote on May 14...that's next Tuesday...to decide whether or not they want to be the next scene of a soil conservation district.

ANNOUNCER

Michigan....



JONES

The news this week seems to be all about districts, \_\_\_\_\_.

Farmers in Jackson County, Michigan, have just voted to form a soil conservation district. Farmers in Berrien County will vote on a similar question on May 20, followed by Allegan County on May 22. And here's something that isn't news, \_\_\_\_\_.

Away up in the northern tip of Michigan's lower peninsula is a region the Indians called "Leelanau" . . . land of delight. It's a remarkable farming region, too . . . and a region fast becoming conservation-minded. And next week, we turn to Grand Traverse County, land of delight.

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

3080-St.

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